

THE WIDOWER

Saturday, November 14, 1868.



"The poor pale girl sat at her mother's feet."—p. 82.

ESTHER WEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PEGGY OGLIVIE'S INHERITANCE."

CHAPTER XII.—AN EVENING AT HOME.

MARTIN POTTER'S home was scarcely an earthly paradise, and he was in a fair way toward making it something quite the reverse. A mere force of will, unless; indeed, he can turn them into slaves, with all the slavish faults, born of fear and unwilling submission. He can only rule by the man may rule slaves, he cannot rule children, by

and in the long run it is only to justice that men bow, or children either.

Mary's heart was once more in revolt against her husband. Before sitting down to her needlework—the necessity for which was never ending, still beginning—Mary took a look up-stairs; she wanted to see the offending bonnet. In the bare, square room, with its scanty bed-furniture and single chair—the poor girls had to take everything by turns, down to basin and looking-glass. Things were constantly reproaching them for coming into the world double as they had done. In the room there was a cupboard; their Sunday frocks were hanging there; and on the little shelf, carefully pinned into a handkerchief, lay the new bonnet. Mary took it out and looked at it. It was certainly pretty, and at another time she would have been vexed at its brightness and gaiety; but the sympathy of the woman, at that moment, was roused for her girl; and when, a little further, pushed into a corner, but also wrapped up in a handkerchief, she came upon the crushed one—not even smoothed out from the rude grasp that had crushed it—Mary had to swallow a rising in her throat, and even put up her hand and hold it tight for the pain in it, before she laid the bonnet in its place, and came down-stairs to sew.

Then, early in the afternoon, Agnes came home, too ill to continue at her work in the close work-room; and Johnny had to be banished from the parlour, in which his fertile invention hourly discovered some means of creating a noise more fearful than the last. The poor pale girl sat down on a low stool at her mother's feet, and laid her aching head on the kind knees still as ready to bear her as ever; and Mary stroked her head, and at last persuaded her to go to bed, while little Polly hushed her songs, and gathered the rose-leaves, which had fallen from one of her overblown roses, and held them to her sister's head. She had discovered how grateful was their cool, tender touch, and said they were like her mother's fingers.

The boys came in from school, and were sent out to play; the elder ones tramped in to tea; Master John was sent off to bed—not without remonstrance on his part—so was little Mary; then the mother gathered her four boys for their evening lesson in writing and arithmetic. Thus the day wore on with its succession of tasks: at this last—and to Mary pleasantest of the day's occupations—she was engaged when her husband came home.

"Shut up your books, boys," she said at once; "we've done very well to-night;" and she smiled upon them, with the smile of a true mother, whose face will throw no shadow over her children's faces, because her own light of life is darkened.

The boys obeyed with alacrity. They were generally glad to make themselves scarce, as they expressed it, in their father's presence. Besides, they had affairs of their own on hand up-stairs; and

saying good night did not mean going to bed for them, as it did for the little ones. So they kissed their mother, and said good night to their father, and were off; Mary whispering in the ear of the volatile Bob, who showed premonitory symptoms of the somersault he would certainly turn as soon as he got up-stairs, "Mind, don't go to bed without saying your prayers."

There were no kind inquiries forthcoming, as to how Mary had enjoyed her visit, when husband and wife were left alone. She felt the omission keenly; she seemed to feel everything keenly to-night.

Martin Potter rose, and walked up and down the small apartment. He was a man who had a quarrel with the world; but he had also a far bitterer quarrel, and that was with himself. "I thought to rise in the world," he said, speaking aloud his gloomy reflections rather than addressing his wife, "and I'm sinking—sinking into that hopeless slough of poverty in which men are no more their own masters than so many cattle. I vowed that I would be independent, that I would call no man master to the end of my days, and all my efforts have failed. I've been offered work on another man's job to-day, and been forced to take it, too," and he ground his teeth as he spoke. This was the secret of his moroseness.

Mary clasped her hands in her lap. "Oh, Martin! after all, we might be happy if you could but be contented."

"Contented!" he burst forth, with a sneer, "contented to live only to do another man's work, and be thrown off when I get useless, to die in a ditch; that ought to content a man, certainly," and he laughed a savage laugh.

"It is the lot of millions," said Mary, "to work for daily bread. Let us do God's will, Martin, and trust in his providence."

He passed over her words. "What do the millions get by being content with such a lot?" he went on. "They sink, and sink, and sink. I've seen misery enough in this city to make a man mad at the very word content. I wonder that the wretches, crushed in the mire as they are, swept out of the way by whole city-fulls, don't rise and turn society upside down. In their place I would. I would live a man's life, or die a man's death—not a dog's!"

Martin Potter might have made a social reformer if his benevolence had been equal to his energy, but it was not.

Mary had covered her face with her hands. She had no lack of sympathy with her husband's side of the argument, one-sided as he was. Her woman's heart went over to him in his disappointment and humiliation, as she thought of him becoming another man's servant, after having been his own master for many years.

"I wish we could get away from here, and go back to the country," said Mary.

"Yes, I wish we could emigrate; but it's too late, I haven't enough to take the lot."

"Martin, take the boys, and I'll come after you with the girls as soon as I can."

It was a noble offer from the woman who made it, to whom such a parting would be torture. She rose and went towards him, and put one large, soft hand on each shoulder, and looked into his face with beaming eyes. "Go, and we will come together again with the love of the old days, when we came together at the first."

He softened, and she hesitated.

"And Martin," she said at last, "I have seen Esther—our Esther."

He started away from her, his face lowered again, and he gave vent to one of those expletives which Mary disliked so much.

"Why didn't you tell me at once?" he said.

"I did not think you cared." Then she went over the events of her visit as far as Esther was concerned, and concluded by saying, "If you knew what a struggle I had to keep quiet, and her so near me, on the day when I saw her at the church, and again this morning. And I am sure that young gentleman was her lover, who saved little Mary's life. It is best not to disturb her now. We can never be anything to her."

A few more questions concerning what she had heard of Mrs. West, and Martin Potter sank into silent thought for the rest of the evening. At ten o'clock Emily came home, and ate her supper and went off to bed without saying good night to her father, thereby showing that she was not reconciled to the destruction of her new bonnet.

There was no further attempt at a better understanding made between Martin and Mary that night. The wife's effort had been turned aside. The thing that seemed so easy was, indeed, as difficult—that turning of the heart—as the turning a stream out of the channel which it has made for itself in the course of ages.

Martin Potter said no more, either good or bad, but he looked more gloomy and bitter than ever—a gloom and bitterness which increased as days went on. Poor Mary, who was not in the secret of her husband's quarrel with himself, thought that it was against her that his black looks were levelled, and conscious of her generous relentings towards him, even at his worst, felt more deeply wounded than before.

The truth was, there had flashed on Martin's mind the thought that in this re-appearance of Mrs. West there might be a loophole of release from the intolerable pressure of his circumstances. Mrs. West had done him an injury. He had never bargained that she should take away the child out of the knowledge and reach of her parents. He had stipulated fairly for the very reverse, and therefore she had lost all right to Esther. But, whispered the evil genius of the man, she might be glad to re-

purchase it. The suggestion came to him from within, and not from without, and yet it was one which he hated to entertain. This man could not bear to think meanly of himself. He had set out in life with a strong feeling of independence, and he had all the virtues of which independence is both the root and the fruit. He was self-denying, he was industrious, he had high self-respect, he had honourable ambition; but this honourable ambition had been defeated by circumstances. He had engaged in speculations for which he had not the necessary capital, and in order to carry them on, he had been obliged to truckle to men who were really dishonest in their intentions.

His better nature told him that the suggestion, that he might profit by the re-appearance of Esther, was an unworthy one. As far as he was concerned, he knew very well that he would not have objected to any Mrs. West who would have relieved him comfortably of some half dozen or so of his progeny. At the same time he knew—as people know a thing in the innermost recesses of consciousness which they will not allow themselves to think even—he knew that the suggestion flashed upon him would be irresistible, and therefore he chose to create a justification for the course he would pursue, by dwelling on the enormity of Mrs. West's offence towards him. She had taken out of his hands all power over his own child. That was the point he seized upon. It was the point he could feel. Of the real theft of which the unhappy lady had been guilty in the uncontrollable yearning of her unsatisfied maternity—the robbery of his child's love, he thought not at all. But, strangely enough, it would seem, he contrived to make himself angry with Mary because she had shown herself willing to renounce Esther at last. "Women never feel anything long enough," he thought, "to make it worth while to consider their feelings." In reality he wanted the additional justification of his wife's long-cherished desire to possess the love of her firstborn.

Having worked himself up to the necessary pitch of resentment, he resolved to see Mrs. West, to claim his daughter, and to threaten the child-stealer with legal proceedings.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRUTH COMES OUT.

HARRY had got his horse; he seldom lost any time in getting anything he wanted, and he and Esther were out riding together when Mr. Vaughan paid his appointed visit to Mrs. West. In that long visit the poor lady poured her sad story into the sympathising ear of her friend and neighbour, and he, as he listened, grew more and more grave and anxious. The lines of his sensitive face quivered with emotion as she concluded her tale, in which she suppressed nothing, excused nothing, but narrated every step with the severest candour.

"I see by your face," she said, humbly, "how greatly you think me to blame. When I look on it in this light myself, it seems terrible to me; stripped of all the false glosses I put upon it, it is terrible! I robbed another of the love God had denied me. You cannot sympathise with the temptation, and how easily I hid from myself the enormity of the wrong I was doing."

"I can sympathise with you only too well," he said, gently, and in a voice as full of humility as her own.

"What shall I do?" she asked, reassured by the tone more than the words even.

"I think you ought to let her know as soon as possible," he replied, speaking of Esther; "the knowledge might reach her from some other quarter, and pain her far more than if you revealed it to her. If I understand her rightly, she has one of those rare natures at once strong and tender."

"It is so hard for her," murmured Mrs. West; "it will shake her trust in everything."

"Yes, it is very hard for her," he answered: "we can hardly do wrong and suffer for it alone. If we could, our sorrow being selfish, would never have the divine power it has of overcoming our sin."

Mrs. West listened, and was soothed by that profoundly sympathetic voice. She was taken by surprise too; for though Mr. Vaughan went through the usual routine of religious observance, no one round him knew that he was what would be called a religious man. She had never heard him speak in this manner; but she was very glad that she had spoken to him now, and she expressed her gladness before returning to the topic which absorbed her.

"And I shall be most happy if I can be of any further use to you. Ah!" he said, as if suddenly moved to speak out his own secret trouble, "you can make amends for this wrong perhaps. You can restore, at need, what you have taken away; the terrible sorrow is, when we sin against love, and can make no amends, because death has shut us out from making it, or may be something stronger than death."

He stopped, and Mrs. West looked inquiringly. Was it possible that she might help him as he was helping her? We know so little of one another—so little of our nearest neighbours, our dearest friends.

He seemed to answer the look. "Yes," he said, "I am speaking from sad experience. I acted selfishly—basely, it seems to me now; then it seemed the reverse of selfishness. I married my wife against her will—she was too gentle and yielding to resist the pressure of other minds, and I thought my devoted love would make amends to her for an unhappy attachment. It was not so; and when she left me with her motherless girls, I vowed that I would never impose my will on any human being again. I, too, took what was not my own, but had been given to another."

They parted before the return of the young people, not before Mrs. West had also confided to her friend the hope that the cousins might love each other. "As Harry's wife she would be nearer to me," she said, "and then he is the heir of all I possess."

Mrs. West set herself to her task at once. That very evening, she found, or made, an opportunity to talk with Esther alone. But her first effort was an entire failure. The weakness of her over-sensitive heart was complicated with physical weakness to such an extent, that her frail body was ready to sink with the trial. After detaining Esther by her side in the twilight, and making more than one vain attempt to find her voice, she did manage to say, in a whisper which startled the girl, "I have something to tell you, darling; something which I ought to have told you long ago."

"What is it, mamma?" said Esther, kneeling at her feet.

But the face she looked up to, even in the uncertain light, was so agonised, that she sprang to her feet, and bending over it, held it to her breast, crying, "Oh, mamma! what has hurt you so? I am sure it is nothing of any consequence. You are too anxious, and you know you were told not to excite yourself."

"Esther—Esther! I have wronged you so!"

"Mamma, you must be ill to say such a thing," replied the girl, passionately, forgetting in her pain her usual soothing tone. "No, I will not hear another word," as Mrs. West was sobbing out something more. And so the effort ended in a fit of faintness, which Esther knew how to soothe. It was one of her mother's attacks, that was all.

It was, indeed, time that Esther knew the story of her parentage. The village of Hurst was already babbling it and cackling over it, and its human geese were beginning to stretch their necks and hiss in her direction. Mrs. Wiggett, for reasons of her own, had whispered it into another pair of ears greedy of gossip; and three sets of these appendages having thus heard the secret, it was, according to the old adage, no longer among the things which could be hidden. Within the half hour, that third pair of ears, having a pair of legs belonging to them, and likewise a tongue, had made their way to that emporium of village news, Mrs. Moss's shop.

It is damping to the ardour of the secret-bearer to find that the important communication which she has to make, quite in confidence of course, has been anticipated, and the secret already in possession of another. The secret is no longer inviolable—in fact, it is felt to be no secret at all. The merest hint that another is informed, is enough to justify the keeper of a secret, who is bursting to reveal it, in breaking the seal upon her lips.

"Isn't that a dreadful story about Mrs. West?" said the gossip, with a look of mysterious horror; "but I dare say you've never heard on't."

"I've knowed ever so long, Mrs. Pratt," said Mrs. Moss, dolefully, but with conscious superiority; "but I've never mentioned it to no one." As she said this she glanced at the pane, and perceived that her lord and master was absent in the meantime.

"To think," continued Mrs. Pratt, now justified in giving Mrs. Moss a bit of her mind, which freedom almost compensated for the loss of the primary satisfaction of being first in the field, "to think that she should have stole away an honest lab'rin' man's child, and made out as she was her own."

Mrs. Moss and Mrs. Pratt agreed that it would be impossible for Esther to hold up her head among gentlefolks any longer; for the wretched feeling of caste is not confined to the higher ranks, nay, there it often remains only as a natural barrier against inferior culture and ruder manners, while in the ranks beneath it flourishes in the most fantastic and repulsive forms.

And while the village babbled, the story spread into other and higher circles, and that without delay. The next morning the cook at Red Hurst had it from the butcher, and when her young mistress had given her the orders of the day she retailed it to her, with the startling addition that Mrs. West was in the hands of the police, and would most likely get penal servitude for life—a fact which her informant had only put as a probability, while his had only ventured to say it was no more than she deserved.

Kate burst in upon her father in his study with the astounding story, which she only half believed. She found him leaning his head on his hand, and he answered very sadly, "The main fact is true enough, my dear, but the rest is made up of malice and envy."

"Oh, papa! what shall we do?" cried Kate, to whom a fact was a simple fact and nothing more. "Who could have thought that she would have turned out such an impostor?"

"Hush! my child. Judge not, that you be not judged."

Kate was turning away to seek her sisters at their morning avocations, when her father called her back.

"My dear," he said, "Esther has known nothing of this, and you must not allow yourself to feel the slightest difference towards her."

Another man might have said *show*. Mr. Vaughan laid a special emphasis on the word *feel*.

After lunch came callers, to find the sisters sitting on the lawn, and not engaged, as usual, either in work or play; neither work nor play had been thought of that morning. Indeed, Connie had only been restrained from rushing off to The Cedars by her father's representation, that even she might not be welcome just yet.

The callers were Mr. Carrington and his mother, old friends and also near neighbours of the Vaughans. Mrs. Carrington was the widow of a

merchant, who had left her a large fortune under her own control, and their only son dependent on her will. Benjamin Carrington had been called to the bar, and was working at his profession as if he depended on it for daily bread. He worked for the sake of work—for the love of work which is born in men of active minds, and not only was he gaining ground in his profession, but becoming known as a political thinker and writer.

Nobody saw much of Mr. Carrington, not even his mother, though he was devoted to her; but the Vaughans saw more of him than any other people did. He was called in the household "Connie's friend." Connie had a great friendliness of character, but this friendship came of early association. She had been the little one, the wild-haired romp of eight, when he was coming to man's estate; and he, being shy at that undeveloped period, the frank little girl had been a great resource and comfort to him when the others were growing into girls as shy as himself. Then Connie had never grown into a "regular young lady." When asked to explain himself, Mr. Benjamin had said, "Oh, a regular young lady is one who expects you to make a fool of yourself in some way or other." That was in his first period of cynicism. Now he had learned to talk to young ladies in West-end drawing-rooms about things which he supposed, with other sensible men, were interesting to them, though how they can be is more than any one can explain. But to Connie he could talk of the things which interested him—of the ideas and movements of the day, and so he was still called Connie's friend, without the slightest covert allusion to anything approaching to love-making.

Mrs. Carrington saw a great deal more of the Vaughans than her son did, and also of Esther West. The young ladies were a great resource to the old one, especially as she was one of those old people who like best the society of the young and lively. Her preference, however, was for Esther. She was a little woman herself, and Esther's grand air captivated her, and her unfailing sweetness had triumphed completely. She was always praising Esther to her son, and she had lately gone a little further, and hinted that she would make a noble wife—a lady who could take her place by her husband's side, however high he rose, who could make herself the companion of cultivated men, the very wife for a man of high aims. Benjamin, however, made no sign; he was only friendlier than ever with Connie Vaughan.

It was, therefore, with an expression of real concern, almost amounting to agitation, that the old lady spoke of what she had just heard. Herself well born, and not at all sharing in the democratic notions of her son, though she had come to regard them as all very well for political purposes, Esther's plebeian birth, if the story was true, was a fatal blot.

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"I have come to hear it contradicted," she said.

"But I cannot contradict it, Mrs. Carrington," said Kate. "It is quite true. Mrs. West herself told papa just before it came out."

"But what is your version of the story?" said Mr. Carrington, looking round but resting his eyes on Constance.

"I have been to papa, and made him tell me," she broke in, answering the glance. "Mrs. West adopted Esther when she was quite a baby, and took her away from her parents without letting them know; but they had really given her the child to keep."

"Come, that is not quite so bad as your story, mother. That was quite sensational!"

"It is bad enough," said Kate, "for Esther's relations have found her out, and will be coming after her. It is very hard on her."

"It's very awkward, to say the least," said Mr. Carrington.

"And a labourer's daughter, too; it is a shocking imposition," said Mrs. Carrington. "But I never liked that meek Mrs. West."

"There is quite a large family," continued Kate; "ten of them, I am told."

"How shocking!" cried Mrs. Carrington. "What do you think of it, Milly, my dear?"

Milly was sometimes mildly oracular; but at present she ventured no opinion on the main point, a mode of procedure which she sometimes adopted, and which made Constance rebel once so hotly that she had made the severe remark, that Milly's part in the affairs of this world was to do nothing but look

good. "I shall be very sorry to lose Esther for a friend," said Milly.

"I don't see why we should lose her for a friend," said Constance, warmly. "This does not make any difference in her. She is the same, whether her father was a duke or a dustman. If she had been brought up in her father's home I should never have known her, and perhaps she would have been different outwardly, so different that I could not have loved her as I do."

Constance had risen to the occasion, and looked quite eloquent, so eloquent that Mr. Carrington regarded her with a kindling look, which was not lost upon his mother; but he said, lightly, "That's right, Connie, always stand up for your friends, especially when they are thrown into the shade."

"I suppose Esther will remain with Mrs. West," said the old lady. "After all, those people can be very little to her."

"Nothing at all," said Kate, to whom the idea of a labouring man for her father, and a family of ten brothers and sisters, such as she pictured to herself, was sufficiently repulsive.

"Oh, Kate! her own father and mother, and sisters and brothers nothing to her. Esther will love them all, whatever they are."

"I should think it would be settled," said Milly, "by Esther marrying Mr. West."

At this Mr. Carrington started from his attitude of assumed carelessness; but, immediately resuming it again, stood listening to the account Kate gave his mother of the Australian's return.

(To be continued.)

A BIBLE HERO.

BY THE REV. JOHN BURBIDGE, SHEFFIELD.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."—Gen. vi. 8.



EVERY few of the world's heroes would have done for Bible heroes. When we look at the so-called heroes of classical antiquity, or even at those who have earned this title in modern history, we see such a combination of the great and the little, the noble and the mean, that we are sure the judgment of man, who looks upon the outward appearance, must be greatly at variance with the judgment of the omniscient God, who looks upon the heart. The glory of God is his goodness. When Moses, his faithful servant, said to him, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," he answered, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

We assert, then, that the world's heroes are not Bible heroes. They are beings cast in very different moulds. They are those "of whom the world was not worthy"—men of the truly heroic

stamp—men who were great simply because they were good, deserving our regard because they had God's regard—and men who after all possessed the only qualities of character which can make true heroes, the record of whose noble deeds can never die.

The name of Noah stands first upon the list, known to every child among us as the patriarch who survived the Deluge, and founded the subsequent race of mankind. Concerning his ancestry it will be enough to say that he was descended from Seth, the third son of Adam. His lot was cast in a remote period of our world's history—three thousand years before Christ came in the flesh—something like five thousand years ago.

The condition of his times finds a melancholy description in the record—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,

and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

It was a period of unexampled wickedness. Even the race of Seth, which had preserved the truth of God from utter extinction, seems to have degenerated with the rest of mankind, and one only in his walk with God commended himself to the Divine mercy, and outlived with his family that fearful day when the windows of heaven were opened, and the whole world went down in the waters of the flood. "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*" In this brief verse we have the matter of a volume. It tells of piety maintained in the midst of prevailing unbelief and sin. It tells of an infinite goodness which was about an ancient servant of God, and suffered him not to perish with the world of the ungodly.

I have nothing to say concerning the question as to whether the flood was partial or universal. I do not suppose that any exact physical traces of the great event remain, or that the question of its extent will ever be settled to the satisfaction of all minds. I have nothing to say concerning the traditions which are found in the literatures of the world. Every schoolboy knows that classical history abounds with manifest allusions to the Deluge, and that every heathen nation, either ancient or modern, has its version of the flood of water. It is enough for me to find the fact recorded with the utmost particularity in the inspired Scriptures. I care nothing about the scientific objections of sceptical readers. Its miraculous character answers all inquiries, and removes from every reverent mind all difficulties. I accept the simple statement that God destroyed man from the face of the earth; that one family alone was preserved in a strange vessel prepared for the purpose; that we have in Noah's conduct one of the grandest triumphs of faith on record, and in his character the qualities which go to make up a true Bible hero.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Let us first look at *his character*. How brief, but how sufficient, is that description of the good man—"Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." It reminds us of that man of the land of Uz whose name was Job, who "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil." When we read that Noah was "perfect," we must not suppose that he was sinless. We know he was not. "There is none righteous; no, not one." The term is merely expressive of religious in-

tegrity, of consistent godliness. He was among those described by the Psalmist in the 37th Psalm—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." He was a good man in very bad times. He was a shining light in very dark days. Ezekiel links him with Daniel and Job. St. Peter tells us he was "a preacher of righteousness." What more need we know? Here was an antediluvian saint. Need we discuss the measure of light he possessed? Can we suppose that he was a stranger to that promise which God had given to our first parents in the Garden of Eden, or that he was unsustained by the assurance that in due time the world should see its great Deliverer from sin and sorrow? Let us not doubt that Noah was an Old Testament Christian. His walk with God meant what a walk with God means now—a trust in Christ for the salvation of the soul; in his case a looking forward to a Saviour coming; in ours a looking backward on a Saviour come.

And this good man "*found grace in the eyes of the Lord.*" He was an object of the Divine favour and goodness. Why the lamp of his piety should have burned so brightly while all around him were ripening in wickedness and preparing for judgment, is among those mysteries of sovereignty which wise men are contented to leave. Thus it was, while wickedness, hatred, lust, and crime abounded, Noah, like Enoch, walked with God. Thus it was, while Satan enthralled the whole race of man with his iron grasp, Noah was one who could escape his snares and defy his power. Is there nothing for us in all this? Shall we not see how perfectly safe those are whom the Lord keeps? Shall we not see the mighty difference which God's grace makes in men?

In that faith which Noah possessed—that heroic faith which made him receive a message without harbouring a shadow of doubt concerning it, we see how strong God can make the weakest of his people who will be willing to trust him. Noah was submitted to a mighty test. Very few have been put through such a furnace as he endured. But he "*found grace*," and came off "*more than conqueror.*"

Can we maintain our ground as the faithful few among the unfaithful many? Can we continue warm and true while the love of many is waxing cold? We can alone do this by the grace which Noah "*found.*" To believe in Christ, while others do not believe in him; to accept a message from God implicitly, while the majority turn our fears into ridicule; to be firm as the rock, while the mass of men are bending like fragile reeds; to be willing to stand alone and refuse to go with the stream, is to be like Noah: and never let us doubt that, having Noah's grace, we shall reap Noah's reward.

Let us now look at *Noah's conduct*. He was, as we have seen, a saint in days when to be a saint was a matter of immense difficulty. His was a piety which was strong enough to flourish alone. How his righteous soul must have been pained at the sight of the abounding wickedness! How his spirit must have sunk within him when God said to him, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." And then followed the order to build that strange habitation, in which this one good man and his family were to outride the waters of the deluge. And who can read the record without observing the decision and the faith which marked his conduct? Not a single inquiry did he make; not a single objection did he raise. His behaviour shines far more brightly than that of Moses, when placed in a similar position. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." "Warned of God," as St. Peter writes, "he prepared an ark to the saving of his house." And for one hundred and twenty years the work went forward.

It needs no imagination to conceive how the witlings of his day would laugh at the crazy old man, as they would deem him. We can fancy how the passers-by would sneer at him, as, with hammer in hand, he put together the timbers of his strange vessel. But nothing could shake his faith in God; nothing could divert him from his purpose. He knew that the rain would come, because God had said it would. He knew that his ship would preserve his family, because he was building it according to Divine direction. And he warned the thoughtless and careless of his generation. We knew he did. St. Peter expressly tells us that he was "a preacher of righteousness." His voice fell on disobedient ears, but he could say, as St. Paul said to the Jews—"Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean." Thus, with nothing but a message from God, for a hundred and twenty years, Noah lived by faith, and it was a faith which never wavered for a single moment. It endured to the end; and he had his reward. The deluge came; the world perished; Noah and his family

were saved. Is it wrong to speak of this ancient servant of God as a hero? If to believe when God speaks—if to be gentle when revilers sneer—if to be calm when foes rage—if to be willing to be laid by, bidden only to trust God—if all this is to be heroic, men never saw a truer hero than Noah. And who can describe the relief of that instant, when the gentle dove returned with the olive-leaf in her mouth? Who can picture the expectation of those seven days which elapsed, and the joy with which the released family stepped upon the firm ground, to give expression to their gratitude in building, as the first act of their new life, an altar unto the Lord?

Space fails me in dealing with the narrative of this wonderful event. The story of the Deluge is among the first stories of which we hear, and though it tells us of something which happened five thousand years ago, it never loses a particle of its interest. We reverence its great central character. We are willing to forget the sin which throws a dark shadow over a portion of his history, for the sake of that Christian virtue which shone so brightly to the last. My dear reader, God has not come to you with any message like that he brought to the patriarch Noah, but he summons you to the belief of his simple word. He calls you to meek submission to his holy will. He bids you calmly trust in him as one who, through Christ, loves you with an unchanging love. The world still sneers at strong faith and consistent piety. When we point them to the 24th of Matthew, and tell them that "as the days of Nee were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be," they ask, scornfully, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

To wait patiently for God; to bear without murmuring what he appoints; to be quite sure that not a single word of his can ever fail; to preach righteousness to our generation, and fear the face of no man; to go forward in God's work, leaving the issue in his hands—this is to follow Noah, and be a partaker of his faith. Thus living, you too "have found grace in the eyes of the Lord," and that grace shall bear you safely to the joy and peace of heaven.

LATE AUTUMN.

 HE violet, white spring cloud, and summer rose,
The slips of sunshine on the forest floor,
The ocean's blue luxuriant repose,
The long calm days and sunsets by its shore,
Sweet air, that from the meadowy stretches flows,
The lark, the dusky nightingale that sings

"To morn and twilight's star, when fields are green
And golden—past and passing are I ween.
And Autumn late from western evenings,
Risen in the wild sad wind, that shadowing blows
Up the dim void, murmurs, "Winter is come!"—
Pile up the logs and dust the books, for soon
Will swell the broadening tempest's sullen hum,
From the white surf-line underneath the moon.



(Drawn by the late GEORGE H. THOMAS.)

"It was with two little children that Mary Morris tramped after the regiment."—p. 91.

A SERGEANT'S STORY.

BY GEORGE MANVILLE FENN.

DEAD, sir, dead; both of them: gone to where there's rest and peace, and no more sorrow; "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary —" You know the rest. Know them! Of course. John Morris was in my troop—B troop, 25th Dragoon Guards; smart, fresh-coloured, honest Yorkshire lad—a good lad, sir; without any of the general rough ways of a soldier: for there's good sort of fellows among us, as well as the sweepings of towns and villages; and I loved that lad, sir, as if he'd been my own son. Why? Because he was a thorough soldier, every inch of him. He came to me to 'list—I was recruiting sergeant then. "Think twice of it, my lad," I says; "ours is a roagh life;" for from his talk I found he'd been having some tiff at home; so "thiak twice of it, my lad," I says: for I did not want to see a fine young fellow throw himself away; and it is that, you know, though it don't sound loyal of me, as an old troop-sergeant-major, to say so; and feeling this—though I knew I should make a profit of the young fellow—I did not like to see him 'list, when a "rough" would have done just as well. But he would do it; he was set upon it; and told me that if I didn't take him, he would join the foot-regiment quartered in the town. So seeing how things stood, and sooner than he should do that, I gave him the shilling, and he entered one of the smartest heavy cavalry regiments in the service.

I always liked him for his frank, honest, open manner, and the way he set to work to learn his duties—riding-school, foot-drill, sword-exercise—no matter what it was, he worked at it; learned quietly and cheerfully; and in a wonderfully short time made himself a smart soldier. You never heard him snubbed for dirty belts or rusty accoutrements; everything belonging to him shone like silver or gold; while his horse was groomed till its skin was like satin. The men called him "Model Jack;" for whenever some one on parade was having it for want of smartness, without pausing for a moment, the captain, or major, would shout, "Rein back, John Morris," tell the one in trouble to look at him and his traps, and then order so much punishment-drill.

But we all liked John Morris; and there was not a man in the troop would have said a word against him, or done him an ill turn; for wasn't he always ready to help a mate who was sick, or do a turn for a young beginner? But he was only a weak man, and he must do what no soldier who has any respect for a woman should do—he must get in love with a nice pretty little body, who was

weak enough to take a fancy to the fine smart young fellow. Seeing what a superior sort of lass she was, if it had been any other man in the troop, I'd have done what I could to stop it; but knowing the lad's character—no smoker, no drinker; but one who spent all his spare time in the barrack reading-room—I couldn't say a word; and so matters went on till we got the route, and were to be shifted from Edinburgh to Hounslow.

Next time I saw John Morris, I knew there was something the matter; and after stable he comes to me, and in a blunt, straightforward way, he says—

"Sergeant, I want to be married. Will you speak to the officers for me?"

"No, my lad," I says, "I won't."

He started, and looked surprised; for I was gruff; while as a rule I was always as friendly to him as I could be to a private—though there isn't a man in the troop who speaks honestly will tell you I was ever a bully.

"Look here, my lad," I says: "if you respect that little lass, you'll just say good-bye to her kindly, and for good; or else tell her to wait till you can buy yourself out, and go into something civilian."

"But—" he began.

"There, hold your tongue, my lad; and just go up to the married men's quarters, and look at the want of common comforts in the accommodation; look at the misery of their life; and then, if you're not satisfied, go and look at the poor women who are not on the strength of the regiment—married without leave, you know—and see whether you'd like to see your little maid brought down to that."

"But I've always done my duty, sergeant, and the colonel would give me leave to be married, and I'd do more to make her comfortable than—"

"Major Ellis wants Sergeant Rollin," shouts some one; and, seeing that was me, I jumped up.

"But you'll ask for me, sergeant?" says John Morris, getting hold of my hand as he looked in my face.

"Be off with you, sir, to your duty," I roared fiercely; and he went away, and so did I, and, as a matter of course—stupidly, as I told myself—I spoke to the major, and he said he'd speak to the colonel; but it was no use, for there were three more men married than there should have been by rights, and they could not have so many women and children in barracks.

I told Morris afterwards, and he thanked me, and went about his duties till the day for marching came, and then I found out that John had married without leave, and, of course, punishment must

fellow as soon as it was known. I would not see it; but it was reported by another sergeant, and, as a matter of course, the poor weak lad was placed in arrest. I say weak; but, there, I don't know—the poor things loved one another very dearly; and the official orders, though they're strong, ain't so strong as human nature.

He never grumbled or said anything about his punishment, but bore it all like a man, though he was anxious enough about his little wife, who travelled by parly train as far as their money would go, and walked the rest of the way up to Hounslow. And then there was the regular misery and struggle for the next few years: the poor little lass not being acknowledged by the regiment as one of the soldiers' wives, and having to lodge out of barracks, and live as best she could upon the beggarly pittance her husband could give her, helped out by what she, poor little thing, with her baby, could earn.

I wasn't going to jump upon a fallen man, but I know John Morris thought deeply upon my words as he saw the smart, pleasant-faced little body sinking day by day into a drudge. I never said a word about it to him, nor he to me; but I did what I could to help him, though that wasn't much.

Then came another shift of quarters, and Mary Morris had a hundred and sixty miles to tramp to the next town we were stationed at; but she did it without a murmur, and a few days after we reached our quarters, I saw her at the barrack-gate.

We were not there very long, but had to make a fresh start, and this time it was with two little children that Mary Morris tramped after the regiment, to reach her husband nearly a fortnight after we had settled down—she looking worn out and haggard with trouble and her long journey. To have seen her now, no one would have known her for the bonnie little lass whom I had seen resting so lovingly upon the lad's arm in Edinburgh town. But, there, it was the usual lot of a soldier's wife who is not on the strength; and from town to town the poor girl followed us about till the very last; and so long as she could be near her husband I believe the poor little thing was happy.

I said till the last; for there came a day when I stood at the barrack-gate with tears in my eyes, that I was quite ashamed of, to see John Morris, the fine stalwart dragoon, in full marching order, leaning down from his horse, his gauntlet glove off, holding his little wife's hand tightly clasped, as he gazed into her loving eyes—eyes as brimful of tears and affection, as were those of the captain's sister, leaning out of her carriage-window, and waving her handkerchief to her brother.

Then came the trumpet-calls, and we were off

leaving many a tearful eye behind. But Mary Morris turned up again at the port where we were to embark; for it was only the sea that could stay the faithful little woman from following her husband. But, there was the sea now; and we were ordered abroad for ten years, to a country that would be the grave of many of us, as I well knew.

I'm not sure, but I think that was Mary Morris's face I saw, all pale and drawn, in one of the boats just pushed off; but it soon faded from sight, as the steam-tug drew our great ship down the river; and then, as I turned away, heavy-hearted and dull at leaving the old country, I met the eyes of poor John Morris, when he must have thought of my words before his marriage, for he groaned, and, poor fellow, his head went down upon his arms on the bulwarks, and I could see his great, broad chest heaving as he sobbed and cried like a child.

Time went on, and up the country we had our work cut out. I'm no lover of butchery, but I'm a soldier by trade, and always tried to do my duty. More than one battle I had been in to come out scathless—the last time owing to a swinging sabre-cut given to a Sikh who was about to shoot me down; and it was not my hand that gave that sabre-cut, but the hand of John Morris.

Then came another fierce engagement, when, worn out with heat and thirst, the order came to charge. The moment before the men were drooping and listless; but as the trumpet rang out, eyes lit up, bronzed faces flushed a deeper hue, and we trotted steadily, knee to knee, over the plain, nearing the enemy at every stride. John Morris was on my left, and I could not help smiling to think what a good man and true I had by my side; when the trumpet-call again rang out "gallop," and on we went until within a hundred yards of the foe, when again came the loud blast: spurs were used, and with a dash like a thunderbolt we were upon them. I recollect the sharp, ringing volley they gave us as we came down, and about the air bearing a strange, shrill cry; after which it was one wild, fierce struggle, till I found myself, breathless and faint, trying to free myself from my horse, who was down, pinning me to the ground. A violent drag set me at liberty, just as the poor beast made its last effort to rise, and fell back dead.

I will not sicken you with the scene around me, one that I tried to leave behind; but I had not limped many paces before a faint voice cried after me, "Sergeant!" and turning, there, raising himself upon his elbow, was poor John Morris, with a look that I shall never forget upon his face. There were plenty of horrors about, but I had eyes only for the poor fellow before me, and

kneeling down, I supported his head, and tried to staunch his wounds.

"No good! no good!" he whispered, "I'm cut to pieces. Done my duty, sergeant, though it was hard work not to desert when I had to leave her. Find her; tell her I was true to the last, and—Cowards!" he cried, while, at the same moment almost, I started up; but half-a-dozen horsemen were upon me, and I was cut down, and knew no more.

It was years after when I saw England again, and tried to find out poor Mary—the weak, simple-hearted girl who had been left behind. I tried hard, but for a long time without any result, till one day I met by chance another woman who had been in the same plight.

"Can I tell you where she is?" she said, "yes; come with me and I'll show you."

I hung back for a moment, thinking of the sad news I had to tell; but duty's duty, and I followed the woman from street to street, for quite half-an-hour, during which time I'd made up the words I meant to say, and was ready with my message, meaning, too, to tell poor Mary where she could draw the pay due to her husband. But I never

delivered my message, for turning to the woman, I said, "Is it much farther?"

"No," she said, "close here; and I'd have been with her, but for the hope that my poor boy would come back."

I hung back again, but she took hold of my arm, as she stopped by an iron gate, and pointed to a multitude of green mounds, saying—

"They laid her there, somewhere, two years ago now, but I don't know which was the grave; for poor folks die fast, and people don't put stones up for soldiers' wives."

"Do you know what she died of?" I said, softly, for I was shocked and surprised.

"Died of?" said the woman, bitterly; "what I should have died of, only I was too hard—died because her husband was dragged away, and her little ones went one after the other; died of a broken heart! a poor, gentle thing, praying that they might meet again."

Yes; that mark was left when the Sikh cut me down, as I held poor John Morris's head; and now, if you please, we'll change the subject, for when I get talking about other people's sorrows, that old wound begins to throb.

CHARITIES.—No. I.

BY FRANCIS W. ROWSELL, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

BETWEEN three millions and a half to four millions are annually spent in London alone for charitable purposes. Assuming that an equal sum is expended in other great towns and in the provinces, for like objects, we find that the annual income of charity attains the truly imperial dimensions represented by over six millions of pounds, exclusive of the vast sum of money annually expended through the Poor Law organisation.

The first thing that strikes one on looking at the history of charitable foundations is that, before the Reformation, private benevolence poured itself into one great channel, from which all lesser channels were supplied, and that since the Reformation the tendency has been for it to flow direct to some object, for the special benefit of which it was intended. The great channel to which it formerly went was, of course, the Church, which was by virtue of its office almoner-general to all Christendom, and was supposed to receive only for the purpose of giving out again, in the most helpful and excellent way, the offerings of her children. She was in theory like some great river running through a thirsty land, overflowing her banks upon it, and conveying to the parched soil the water of life and refreshment. To some extent

the similitude was warranted, especially in the days, long before the Reformation, when the Church aimed not at making herself a political power, nor at setting up her chief men—"the servants of the servants of God," they called themselves—as lords over God's heritage. But when, in the Middle Ages and in those "good old times," which people affect to deplore, in that they are gone for ever, the Church aimed, and achieved her object too, at becoming a political power, it was found that one of the first effects of the poison she had drunk was to make her unmindful of her great office of dispenser of the good things which pious persons gave for the use of the "household of faith." Money was wanted to defray the cost of political and diplomatic intrigues, to pave the way for the advancement of friends, to pay the hire of those who threw down enemies. Vast sums of money, which erewhile flowed into places that greatly needed them, were thus diverted from their best course, and the efforts of the clergy were directed towards making the yield of alms as large and ample as possible for their own ends.

The riches of the clergy were not, however, wholly absorbed by their owners' expenses. In the monasteries, which were never shut, the poor and needy always found a refuge; and travellers on their journey through a country in which inns

were scarce, were always sure of hospitality in the religious houses. By thus providing for the indigent, the clergy prevented the community from being taxed for their support. But the system had its dark side as well as its bright one. The almsgiving was indiscriminate, the gates were open to all comers, and, in latter days especially, there was a large per-cent-age of idlers and ruffians by profession, who took advantage of the system to abuse it, and who occupied the place of better men.

With the Reformation came a great change—a change possibly too violent and revolutionary for the well-being of charitable institutions. Of course the monasteries, and all the good and evil attendant upon them, went to the wall; but not only so, the greater portion of those great revenues which had borne the expenses of the monasteries was confiscated to the royal use, while the remainder was given away to laymen, courtiers, and others whom the king wished to oblige.

But the appeals to charitable instincts continued to be made; indeed they became more and more piteous, in view of the vast amount of unrelieved distress that existed, and they were answered with as much readiness as before, only the form of the benefit was altered. If a man wished to leave money to build a church, to endow a charitable institution, to relieve the poor at certain seasons, or for any other purpose not strictly ecclesiastical, he left it in the hands of trustees, instead of, as heretofore, in the hands of the clergy. The money was specifically bequeathed, and was specifically applied, the Court of Chancery taking to itself the duty of supervising and seeing that the testator's wishes were, if legitimate, properly carried out. Even for matters purely ecclesiastical—as for requiems, masses for the dead, and such like objects—trustees were as often as not appointed; and these were commonly the clergy or guardians of the church in the immediate neighbourhood of the testator. Probably never, after the Reformation, was there a single instance of a general bequest to Holy Church. The fashion sprang up of choosing a particular class or place as the special object for bounty, and of conveying the bounty straight to it by means of direct conduit-pipes. Charity became dissipated in very many directions, instead of being centralised in one grand quasi-charitable organisation.

It is from the Reformation, and from periods subsequent to it, that most of our charitable institutions date their origin, some few hospitals excepted. Gifts for "pious uses," such as singing masses for the souls of the dead, paying for so many candles to be burned at the shrine of St. So-and-so, for wood to burn heretics, *et hoc genus omne*, continued to be made in a modified form after the Reformation; but though some of them,

those for requiem-singing for example, were allowed to remain unmolested by the state until quite modern times, the greater portion were appropriated by Elizabeth's government, and turned into channels where they would fructify to better advantage.

Certainly the objects of some of the old bequests are as quaint and singular as the form of them, and it is an occupation both interesting and instructive to examine, cursorily at least, the objects and the form. It is instructive to see how different was the mode in which charitable impulses found expression in the old time to that in which they now do so. If we examine the long roll on which the gifts of the beneficent are emblazoned, we shall see that many of them, especially if bequeathed to parishes, are given to "the poor" generally, without reference to special wants, and without defining what was meant by "the poor." These gifts, in many cases, have proved to be very acceptable as a means of relief to the needy, who have through them been saved from actual destitution; in other cases, they have simply gone in mitigation of the poor-rate, and so have come short of veritably charitable object; while in some cases, where there were not any poor, or where the poor have been provided for in other ways, they have proved a source of embarrassment to the trustees, and a root of jealousy to the nearly poor, who have pretended a claim to them.

There were numerous gifts to poor folk, accompanied by conditions more or less material in character, and unsuggestive of having been dictated by the true spirit of charity, as we understand it now—gifts to certain poor people, on condition that they should go to church on a fixed number of Sundays at least; on condition of their taking the sacrament; of their not having had parish relief during the year. There are gifts of money to buy "cakes and ale on Palm Sunday," "to provide coals to be given to the poorest parishioners in the dead time of winter," for bread to be distributed in certain seasons, for provisions to be sent to the "poor prisoners," in the two Compters and Newgate, the King's Bench and the Marshalsea. Peter Symonds, in 1586, left a gift to Christ's Hospital on condition that sixty of the boys should come to the church of All Saints, Lombard Street, "yearly for ever," on Good Friday morning, and claim the same of the churchwardens; and he further ordered that three shillings and fourpence should be spent "in the purchase of good raisins, which should be divided in threescore parts, in paper, and one part given to each child." Gifts were made "towards the relief of the poor distracted people in the hospital of Bethlehem;" for the purpose of providing so many "sacks of coals, called charcoals," for the poor, "between the feasts of All Saints and

Christmas;" for the purpose of forming a fund out of which to lend £100 to certain "poor young men, to have the same for three years, upon finding sureties for the repayment thereof at the end of three years;" to provide, "for the poorest people of the 24 wards in London, at the best hand, 12,000 faggots every year for ever." At Sutton Coldfield there was a gift to provide marriage-portions for a certain number of maidens of the place. Sir Martin Bowes, in 1551, left money "to provide a preacher to make a sermon in the church of St. Mary, Woolnoth, on St. Martin's Day, yearly, and that the preacher should have 6s. 8d." Such members of the Goldsmiths' Company as attended the service were to have a dinner at the testator's expense; "8d. should be paid to the clerk for tolling the bell," and the churchwardens were to have 9s., "to be spent upon spice, bread, ale, wine, and comfits, for the churchwardens and the heads of the parish." Another testator left a sum of money that a commemorative sermon might be preached on the anniversary of his death; another, Henry Barton, in 1434, left property, of which the proceeds were to be paid to the parish of St. Mary, Aldermanry, "so that the said rector of St. Mary's and his successors, or their parish priests, when they should say prayers in the pulpit of the church aforesaid, should pray for the souls of Richard Barton his father, and Dionisia his mother, and for the souls of their children, and all the faithful deceased." This good man, having an eye to the possibility of neglect on the part of the

mass priests, provided that the trustees of his gift might distrain for a fine upon the trust property "until the said rector or priests should be compelled to make such prayers as aforesaid." Henry Fisher, a freeman of the Skinners' Company, London, left a sum of money to provide an exhibition at the free grammar-school at Tunbridge, (which was, and is still, under the care of the company), and, further, for "a learned and godly preacher, to be appointed by the master and wardens of the said company, who was to exhort the said company to unity and concord, and to be favourable maintainers of the said free grammar-school."

One of the most quaint in style and singular in purpose of the many gifts to charity, within the city of London, is the following, which was given to the church of St. Sepulchre by Newgate, in 1605, by Robert Dow. Fifty pounds were left to the parish, on condition that a person should go to Newgate, in the still of the night before every execution day, and standing as near as possible to the cells of the condemned, should with a hand-bell (which was also bequeathed) give twelve solemn tolls, with double strokes; and then, after a proper pause, deliver a solemn exhortation. Robert Dow also ordered that the great bell of the church should toll on the morning, and that as the criminals passed the wall on the way to Tyburn, the bellman or sexton should look over, and say, "All good people pray heartily unto God for these poor sinners, who are now going to their death."

MY FIRST ADVENTURE AT SEA.

A SHORT YARN.—BY WILLIAM H. G. KINGSTON.

NOW, father, do let me go to sea; you don't know how I wish it. My dear mother, do just try and persuade my father to let me go. Aunt Jane, you know that he will do anything to please you—just do you ask him to let me be a sailor, and I am sure that he will listen to you." Such were the words with which, day after day, and week after week, I attacked my three nearest relatives for a whole year or more.

"But, Ben, dear, you know nothing about the sea," observed Aunt Jane one day, when I was alone with her.

"That's the very reason that I want to go to sea, to learn about it," I answered, thinking the argument conclusive. Of course I had other reasons. I wanted to visit strange countries and strange people, and to meet with strange adventures; and I had pictured a sailor's life as the most delightful in existence. I had yet to learn what I have since discovered—that no state of human existence is thoroughly delightful,

and that the only life which has a claim to be called satisfactory is that which is employed in doing as much good as possible.

"But are you not afraid of being drowned, Ben? They say that the dangers of a sea life are very great."

"No, I am not afraid, even though the dangers are great," I answered, stoutly; and I added, with perfect sincerity—for I had been taught the truth by my truly pious parents, and was not ashamed to confess it—"God can watch over us at sea as well as on shore, and so I do not think that I ought to have less trust in him in one place than in another."

I should say that I have held to that faith through life, and have never been deceived. My aunt would not promise to try and persuade my father to let me go to sea, but she undertook to tell him that she was persuaded I was in earnest in wishing to go. Still nothing came of it, and my hopes began to wane, when one day my father, to my surprise, replied, as I once more brought forward the subject—

"Very well, Ben, you shall have your wish, my boy. I've heard it said that a few years spent on board a collier is one of the surest ways of making a lad a real seaman. An old captain, a friend of mine, now a shipowner, who has several vessels in the coal trade, will take you as an apprentice on board one of them."

This was not at all the thing I wanted or expected. My wish had been to go to some foreign lands in a big ship, dressed in a smart uniform as a midshipman; still, as I had resolved to go to sea on any terms, I screwed up my courage, gladly accepted the offer, and thanked my father warmly for having acceded to my wishes. My father was a thoroughly practical man, and as I wished to be a sailor, he was determined that I should do what he considered the best thing for enabling me to become a thorough one.

A week afterwards he asked me if I was still in the same mind. I answered, "Yes," boldly, and the next day he took me to Newcastle, and after a long talk with an old gentleman in an office smelling of tar and paint, and full of ship's stores, and signing some papers, he told me that all was arranged, and that I was to go aboard the *Lady Stewart*, trading between the Tyne and Thames, and other parts of England. My outfit was quickly procured, and before I could well look round me, I found myself on board what I had so long been dreaming about—a real vessel. A tear stood in my father's eye as he wrung my hand and returned to the shore.

The crew were mostly a rough set, with black faces, unwashed hands, and tarry trowsers and frocks. Their talk, too, was rough, seldom a sentence being uttered without a strange oath. Our life, too, was rough, though we had plenty to eat; but we were at sea for the best part of the year. No weather stopped us. It was watch and watch, and bright eyes were needed to keep a look out for the lights on the coast, as we passed up and down it, and vessels ahead. There were not so many steamers in those days as there are at present. Among the crew of the brig was a quiet, steady man, Alexander Archibald by name. I took a liking to him from the first, and was glad when I was placed in the same watch.

Two years of my apprenticeship had passed by without any particular adventure happening to me, and I was becoming, though still a young lad, a tolerable seaman. We were bound southward, from Newcastle to London. We had crossed the Wash, if I remember rightly, and were somewhere off the coast between Cromer and Great Yarmouth, when at sundown, the wind, which had been light and variable, shifted to the southward, and came on to blow very hard. We hauled our wind, and stood off shore. I was in the first watch. The night was very dark, for the sky was overcast; there was no moon, and not a break in the clouds for a star to shine through, and the deeply-laden brig plunged heavily through the short, chopping seas, which occasionally broke aboard her. The hatches were battened down with tarpaulins

nailed over them, and the watch below were ordered to secure the fore-scuttle-hatch from the inside. Wet to the skin, in spite of my thick pea-coat and sou'wester, I was not sorry when my watch was over, the other watch called, and I could go below. Archibald followed me, and secured the hatch, but our other watchmate remained on deck. Half a minute served me to slip out of my wet clothes, and less time than that, in spite of the stifling atmosphere of the fore-peak, for me to be fast asleep. On went the brig, plunging, bows under, through the darkness. For how long a time I slept I could not tell, when I was awakened by a loud crash, followed by a sound overhead, as if something had been driven across the deck. I thought that the brig had run on shore. Fearful cries reached us; then all was silent. I sprang from my berth; so did Archibald from his.

"The ship has been run into, and is sinking; still we have time to save ourselves," he exclaimed, as he sprang towards the scuttle. "Stick to me, Ben." He reached the hatch, but in vain he tried to force it off: something heavy was on it. "Hand up a hammer, Ben; you will find one on the top of my chest." I brought him the hammer. He dealt blow after blow on the hatch—it would not move. He next tried to prit it open, but he could not stir it.

"We are caught like mice in a trap," he exclaimed. "The bowsprit has been driven in across the scuttle-hatch by the vessel which struck us, and no human power can stir it. However, Ben, never say die while there is life."

Very fortunately, while groping about, I found a capstan-bar. I handed him the bar. "We'll work our way up by the fore-hatchway," he exclaimed. "Stand aside; I'll knock in the bulkhead." With all the strength which our critical position gave him—I won't say of despair—he dealt a succession of blows at the bulkhead, till he had knocked a hole big enough for himself to get through. He dragged me after him. We found ourselves under the fore-hatchway, but we had still to force off the hatch. There was not room even for me to stand upright, on the coils of rope and other articles stowed away there. Again he set to work with the bar (it had been heaved down the previous evening by one of the men at the head of another in joke). He used it like a battering-ram, working away at the hatch. I did all I could, for I had no wish to die, and I thought every moment that the brig would go down. At last Archibald stopped; he had stuck the end of the bar into a hole he had made. Still the strong, thick canvas held down the hatch. He had lost his own knife: he asked for mine. I had sharpened it the previous day. He managed to get the knife far enough in to slit the tarpaulin across. The capstan-bar finished the work, and to my great joy I heard his voice from the deck, telling me that he would haul me up. He quickly did so, and we were free.

It was, however, at first doubtful whether we had

changed for the better. We shouted. No voice answered. My heart, I own, sunk. We had either been deserted, or our shipmates had been washed overboard. The night was dark as pitch; the brig was labouring heavily, though the wind and sea had gone down. The binnacle-lamp was still burning. By it we found that a light from a light-ship off the Norfolk coast bore west-north-west. "Sound the well, Ben, while I try and make out how our masts have stood, and which sails are set," said Archibald. To my great satisfaction I was able to report that the vessel was not making much water. "All right, then, my boy," he cried, in a cheerful voice. "Put up the helm. The fore-stay-sail is still set. I'll square away the yards, and we'll put her before the wind, and run to the northward." I did as he bid me; the brig answered her helm, and under her two topsails and foresails, which we managed afterwards to set, we steered a northerly course. On amid the darkness we ploughed our way, through the still foaming seas, which followed rearing after us, as if angry at our having escaped them; indeed, it had breezed up again, and blew very strong. Our spirits rose though, as we found that our exertions were successful, though we could not help mourning for the loss of our old skipper and other shipmates.

"He was a good old fellow," said Archibald; "kind-hearted, too, as ever lived. I hope he's gone to heaven."

"So do I," I answered. "I saw him last Sunday reading the Bible, so I've no doubt about it."

"Reading the Bible is a good sign, and a step in the right direction. It teaches us to know God's will; but that alone is not enough: we must do it, Ben. I haven't much learning, but I know that," said Archibald.

That was an anxious night. Any big ship might have run into us, or we might have run into one, or the leaks might have increased, and we might have gone down. Still not for a moment did that brave fellow Archibald lose his courage or his cheerfulness.

By the time day broke we were off the Humber. The weather, as the sun rose, moderated, and there was less sea, the wind coming off the land. I now went below, and brought some breakfast up for Archibald, and a right hearty one we eat. The brig sailed well. Again I sounded the pumps, and found that she was still making very little water. Our spirits rose. "We'll take her in by ourselves, Ben, and get some credit, I hope," exclaimed Archibald.

When off Scarborough, a boat boarded us, and her crew declared that we could never take her into port by ourselves, and wanted to make a salvage of the vessel. "No, no, mates," answered Archibald; "I'm now captain of this craft, and captain I intend to remain, till I give her up safe to her owners; but I'll engage four of you as hands on board, to assist me

to navigate her. If you don't wish to go, good evening. I'll find some other men who will be glad enough of the chance."

This firm language had the desired effect, and four agreed to come aboard, and take the brig into Hartlepool, for such recompence as the owners would award them. The weather continued fine, and we brought up off Hartlepool. No sooner had we dropped our anchor, and made all snug, than a steam-tug came puffing off to us, and the master wanted to persuade Archibald that we were still in danger; but Archibald knew better. He made the same answer that he had done to the fishermen, adding, "This craft belongs to the owners, and I am not going to let you take money out of their pockets if I can help it. I'll pay you thirty shillings to tow the brig into port, and that is fair pay—not a shilling more." The master of the tug, finding that he could not come over Archibald, agreed to his terms, and we were towed into Hartlepool.

As soon as the brig was moored, Archibald proceeded to Shields to report our safety. He came back at night, highly pleased, saying that the underwriters had awarded him a hundred pounds; and a clerk came down to divide fifty pounds between the fishermen who had helped us to bring the brig in; and very well contented they were.

I have since gone through many adventures, some far more interesting and exciting than this; but, at all events, the brave Archibald's conduct on this occasion showed me what perseverance and courage will do, and I have always endeavoured to follow his example, and to hold it up to others.

It added greatly to our satisfaction when, a few days afterwards, the old master and the rest of the crew of the brig arrived. They had been taken off by the vessel which ran into us, and it was not till they had lost sight of the brig that they discovered that we were not on board. The old man was almost beside himself at the thought of our being left to perish, and induced the master to put back to look for us. We, in the meantime, had got on deck, and were running to the northward. He consequently, of course, thought that the brig had gone down, and we in her.

This report reached my family before I returned home. My mother and Aunt Jane nearly fainted away when they saw me. When they got better, I saw them putting away some black dresses they had been making up. My father asked me if I was still resolved to keep at sea.

"Yes, father," I answered; "it's a good profession, though it has its ups and downs like others, and its dangers also, I'll allow. But, as you and mother have often told me, God sees us on the wide ocean as well as on the dry land. I hope and believe that he will look after me, and, as heretofore, save me from harm, and bring me back safe to port."